

Domestic Relations Committee  
Judicial Conference of Indiana

**Minutes**  
March 16, 2001

The Domestic Relations Committee of the Judicial Conference of Indiana met in Indianapolis, Indiana on Friday, March 16, 2001 from 10:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at the Indiana Judicial Center in Indianapolis.

1. Members present. Lorenzo Arredondo, Robert R. Aylsworth, Thomas J. Felts, E. Michael Hoff, William J. Hughes, Kathy R. Smith, Richard G. Striegel, and Daniel F. Donahue, Chair.
2. Staff present. Jeffrey Bercovitz provided the committee with staff assistance.
3. Guests present. Carol Branham, Indiana Child Support Advisory Committee; Andrew Cosby, PACE; Linda L. Chezem, Purdue University/Indiana University; Janice Davidson, Marion County Domestic Relations Bureau; Robert Monday, PACE; and John and Judy Stone were also present.
4. Minutes approved. The minutes for the meeting of the committee on February 16, 2001 were approved.
5. Mediation.
  - a. Kathleen Rusher, Facilitator, Allen County Model Court Project, explained her program to the members of the committee. She distributed a folder including materials about her project. She meets with CHINS and Termination family's one hour in advance of the initial hearing and includes attorneys, support persons from the family, OFC and others in the room together. She explains their rights, and they prepare a plan fix the problems that engendered the court involvement. This plan is then taken to the courtroom with all parties present for approval. The staff budget is \$100,000 including 1 full-time facilitator, one part-time facilitator, and a CASA director. 176 families completed the process in one year
  - b. Jan Davidson, Marion County Domestic Relations Bureau explained her program to the members of the committee. She distributed materials about her program. She indicated they do a few mediations as referred by the courts each year and many custody evaluations. Their mediation sessions last about 1 ½ hours, their agreements can be reviewed by attorneys, all their mediators are master's degree social workers, and they generate \$70,000 each year in sliding scale fees for a \$198,000 budget. Their staff includes 5 persons with master's degrees and 2 support staff.
  - c. Steve Spence, Marion County IV-D Program mediator, explained his mediation program to the members of the committee. He distributed materials, including a form mediation agreement, to the committee. He receives referrals from the IV-D court in Marion County under contract. He said had 135 referrals for mediation in 1999, 165 in 2000, and 19 so far in 2001. He deals with visitation, custody, and paternity cases as well. They work on support issues under the theory there is more support with increased visitation. The IV-D prosecutor only makes the referrals, but the court may refer if the prosecutor agrees. The charges \$400.00 per case, and \$30.00 for a no show. The typical mediation is 3-4 hours, concluding with a written mediation agreement. Over 80% of his IV-D mediations are paternity cases.
  - d. Julia Orzeske, Executive Director, Indiana Commission for Continuing Legal Education explained the keep a list on line of 279 registered domestic relations mediators. She

explained the resources for family mediation is less than civil mediation. She reviewed the mediation rules with the committee members and distributed materials about her program.

e. Judge Linda Chezem reviewed a draft grant proposal to provide an interactive website for parenting time guidelines. The members of the committee agreed to guide and review the work conducted under the grant.

6. Next meeting dates. The members of the committee agreed to meet again from 10:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Indiana Judicial Center on Friday, April 20, July 20, August 17, September 12, and October 19, 2001, all from 10:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Indiana Judicial Center except Sept. 12, which would be on Wednesday from 10:00 - 12:00 Noon in conjunction with the Judicial Conference. They agreed to meet on Friday, January 18, February 15, March 15, April 19, May 17, July 19 and August 16, 2002 from 10:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Judicial Center. The committee members cancelled the May 18 meeting.

The committee agreed to hold no meeting in November in favor of attending a Judicial Center conference on Domestic Relations Mediation on Wed. and Thursday, November 7 –8, 2001.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey Bercovitz, Director  
Juvenile and Family Law